Looking beyond trade, will the FTA also influence exchange in innovation?

Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang visited Bern for the signing of the MOU that was closing officially the negotiations for the FTA. At the end of his visit to the Einstein Museum in Bern, he picked up a pen and wrote in the guest book, 'Innovation is the lifeblood of mankind'.

It seems a rhetorical sentence, written by a consumed politician but behind that sentence there is much more. During the same visit, Li Keqiang answered some questions from the public. A Swiss university student asked Li Keqiang if he still has time to study. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang answered with a smile: "No matter how busy, one should take time to read. Without reading, it is difficult to have the development of thoughts; it is difficult to understand the process of human civilization".

These two simple moments, on the wave of the enthusiasm for the conclusion of the FTA, express very well the sentiments of Chinese people towards such an agreement. The agreement formally covers economic trade but it also carries the potential for enhancing an exchange of intellectual, social, science and education projects. Without cooperation in science there is no progress for the world. If there is progress in scientific results, there is progress in technological achievement and if we are able and capable with innovation we can transform ideas in market results and successes. So “innovation is the lifeblood of mankind” and the FTA is a way to open the door to the sharing of the results of learning and innovation. The two countries will engage into a vast dialogue about their innovation policies, learn from each other about areas where technology can be developed and identify complementary capabilities. Tech startups might benefit from an easier access to funding sources and to some of the purchasers of their products such as universities.

We at swissnex China are convinced that the FTA will boost the already healthy scientific and education cooperation between our two countries. A side effect of the increased trade might be the need to train more executives and entrepreneurs about cross border transactions and international business. Swiss companies might want to also develop new training schemes inspired by their long experience with vocational and professional education training.

Already since the opening of swissnex China in 2008, the exchange of scholars, students, researchers has increased tremendously but the FTA is giving even a large boost. The FTA is not only a tool to make life simpler for enterprises to trade but, on the contrary, quite a few enterprises in both countries will face a stronger competition. This in turn is an incentive to become better or, in other words, to innovate in order to live and prosper. How to cooperate in the innovation process while remaining competitive, will be the game to play and to understand in the follow-up of the FTA.

swissnex China is here to help and, as much as possible, to stir the cooperation process between the two countries.

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From our web site, swissnexchina.org:

Save the date / upcoming events:

- October 18th/19th
  Stepping Stone Symposia on Cancer and Brain Disorders

- October 24th/25th
  Stepping Stone Symposia on Natural Products and Drug Discovery

- October 31st
  Swiss University All Alumni Event
  Topic: “Free Trade Agreement, Free Trade Zone – how do they impact innovation in China?”

- November 4th
  Swissnex China Lecture on “Manufacturing and the New Industrial Revolution” with author Peter Marsh

Current program:

- CTI – China Market Entry CAMP
  Since August 2013 Swiss start-ups are not alone when exploring the Chinese Market. swissnex China together with CTI helps Swiss start-ups make their first steps by exploring and sharing expertise with experts in China. By organizing meetings and connecting the start-ups to their peers here, a platform has been created for innovative entrepreneurs to share and evaluate, and to gain insights first hand.

- SSSTC Stepping Stone Symposia
  The SSSTC program is a governmental framework between China and Switzerland, aiming to encourage and strengthen individual contacts by building multi-level research cooperation between institutions, research groups as well as individuals. With events such as the Stepping Stone Symposia, the SSSTC would like to pave way for the involvement of industries in the second action phase from 2013-2016. These Symposia are envisioned to be a series of conferences participated by the most outstanding scientists and relevant industries. For further information visit our website.